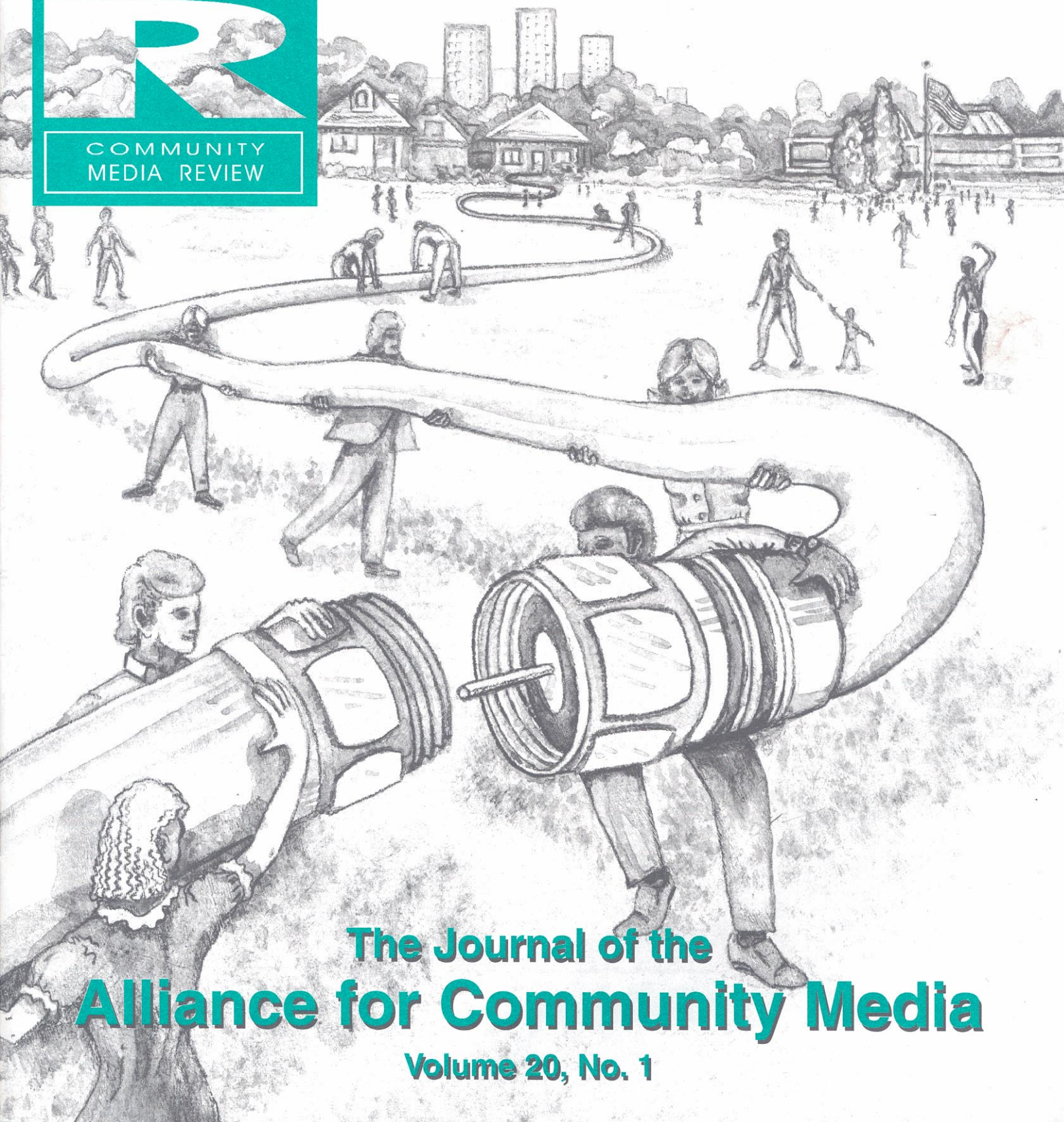


Building Support for Community Media



COMMUNITY
MEDIA REVIEW



The Journal of the
Alliance for Community Media

Volume 20, No. 1

Get in touch with your community with the Interactive Video Bulletin Board

THE CHANNEL THAT TAKES REQUESTS:

- Lets viewers choose what they see.
- Handles up to 999 topics of any length.
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- Now in use in over 27 U.S. cities.

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Community Television of Knoxville*

"Since placing the system in service, we have seen a community response that now exceeds 18,000 inquiries per month. The Interactive Video Bulletin Board has become an integral part of our community service program"

*- Ian N. Wheeler, Executive Director,
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*- Barbara Popovic, Executive Director,
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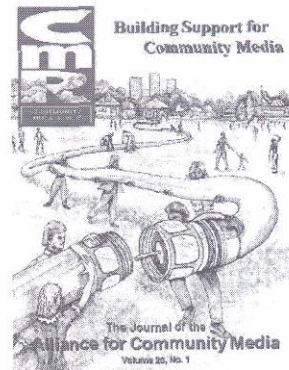
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Cover illustration by Mac Jones

From the Chair

1997: The Next Mile of the Marathon

by Alan Bushong

With 1996 now history, the **Alliance for Community Media** and community media advocates across the country can take great pride in our accomplishments. Yet the environment today is no less ominous. Corporate media is increasingly used to instill a consumer culture that promotes, justifies, and makes righteous the materialism and selfishness that permeate our society. As a result, there has never been a greater need for us to continue the Alliance's working partnership with community media advocates to preserve and build the opportunity for meaningful community access to the dominant media.

Few years, including 1997, may have the flash or pizzazz of 1996. How could they? Yet the apparently quiet times like now cannot lull us to sleep. Stealth bills in state legislatures threaten the ability of local communities to use franchises to gain just compensation for the private, for-profit use of public property and rights-of-way. Other proposed bills would unfairly force local communities to count access channels, equipment, and institutional network access as a part of a capped compensation.

As **Mike Greenberger** said at the Alliance conference last summer, working in the public interest is like running a marathon. Our work is continuous. Instead of 1996 being a dash to the finish of our work, 1996, 1997, and the years beyond are equally important, even if not equally flashy. In a marathon, the miles are all the same length.

In this column I'll repeat many of the comments that I made at the 1996 conference. Unfortunately, little has changed. I pledge an update in Milwaukee at our 1997 Conference and hope to see you there. Let's all join to make our rare times together a powerful educational and motivational experience. What follows is excerpted from an address I made at the **1996 Alliance Conference**.

With our 1996 successes at the **Supreme Court**, in federal legislation, and in **FCC** filings, we have just completed a great year. And it took all of us—the one million-plus volunteers across the country; Alliance members who provide access centers and who provide programs to your communities; a visionary Board; and a talented, tireless staff, all working together in partnership. The winners were communities across the nation that made and viewed over **one million hours** of new, unique and valuable programs in the past year.

We needed the efforts of everyone to achieve these successes.

Kia'i Kaleo, the Alliance drum, reminds us of how tools of communication were developed to help us reach others we could not see face to face, and to communicate deep feelings. The drum was one of the first tools used to extend the reach of communications. *The drum is an example of technology serving people.*

Little did the makers of drums expect that subsequent communications technologies would be controlled by such a

privileged few, and used to dominate and disenfranchise.

Community media advocates know. After more than 20 years of hard-fought victories to carve out public space in cable, we now face the offspring of unparalleled mergers. If we thought cable franchising of the 1980s was bad, now there are fewer, but massively larger, cable giants. And let's meet the telephone companies, who in their **Open Video System** filings with the FCC dismissed the notion of PEG access obligations in return for their private, for-profit use of public rights-of-way property.

We hear about competition and opportunity at every turn, yet what do we have? Let's look at the legacy of the **1996 Telecommunications Act**. The only competition to date is the race to see which Baby Bells could merge operations first. For your information, **Bell Atlantic** and **NYNEX** won.

We're told that opportunity abounds, yet how widespread is this opportunity? And how widespread are the benefits?

According to **Business Week**—hardly a left-wing publication—in 1995, corporate CEO compensation exceeded \$72,000: *not per year, but per week.*

AT&T CEO **Robert Allen**'s 1995 compensation was almost \$6,000,000 as he cut more than 40,000 jobs. **IBM** CEO **Louis Gerstner** made more than \$30,000,000 in the last three years while cutting 60,000 jobs.

At the same time, the Bureau of Labor forecasts that one of every 20 Americans will be laid off this year. Why?

The United States has the greatest imbalance of power and wealth on this planet. Life is great for a few, not so great for most, and getting worse for many. The top one percent of wealthy Americans own vast amounts of wealth—estimates range from 40 percent to over 80 percent. The situation is getting worse.

In 1995, **Business Week** reported the following, adjusted for inflation: corporate CEO pay rose 27 percent, white-collar worker pay rose 2 percent, and factory worker pay fell 1 percent.

Over a 5-year period, real median household income dropped 6 percent, CEO pay rose 92 percent, corporate profits rose 75 percent, worker layoffs increased 39 percent.

Not that the consumer of widely distributed corporate media would know any of this. The dominant media have been used not only to create the culture of consumption epitomized by commercial television, *but to serve and to validate the purposes of the privileged few at the top.*

Our media and those who own it worship the Dow Jones averages. Even **NPR** pays hourly tribute. Big gains are good, losses are scary, and perspective is absent. When market losses make headlines, how much of the commercial media are comparing current stock prices to January 1, 1995? If the stock market fell 500 points today, repeating the Black Friday of the late

See 1997, page 15...



Alliance Photo
Alan Bushong

"Instead of 1996 being a dash to the finish of our work, 1996, 1997, and the years beyond are equally important, even if not equally flashy."

Cable Franchise Renewal

Federal Requirements for PEG

by James N. Horwood

Availability of access. The appropriate level of PEG access availability and financial support is frequently an issue at the time of franchise renewal (or initial franchising). The basic PEG provision is set forth in Section 611 of the **Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984** (47 U.S.C. §531). That provision permits franchising authorities to establish requirements for the designation of channel capacity for PEG use. A city may require as part of a franchise, or as part of a cable operator's proposal for renewal, that channel capacity be designated for PEG use, and may require rules and procedures for the use of such channel capacity. A city may enforce "any requirement in any franchise regarding the providing or use" of PEG channel capacity, including the authority to enforce franchise provisions for "services, facilities, or equipment." Section 611 further provides that a cable operator may not exercise any editorial control over any PEG channel capacity except as provided in Section 624(d), 47 U.S.C. 544(d), to the limited extent that a franchise permits the operator to deal with programming that is "obscene or...otherwise unprotected by the Constitution of the United States."

The **Cable Consumer Protection and Competition Act of 1992** did not amend Section 611. Two significant changes regarding PEG access availability were made by that Act, however, namely, (1) a requirement that the basic tier subject to rate regulation include "[a]ny, public, educational, and governmental access programming required by the franchise of the cable system to be provided to subscribers" (Section 623(b)(7)(A)(ii), 47 U.S.C. §543(b)(7)(A)(ii), and (2) the addition of explicit language that "[i]n awarding the franchise, the franchising authority ... may require adequate assurance that the cable operator will provide adequate public, educational, and governmental access channel capacity, facilities, or financial support" (Section 621(a)(4), 47 U.S.C. §541(a)(4)).

Franchise Fee Limitations. A particularly significant provision of the **Federal Cable Act** is Section 622, 47

U.S.C. §542, which limits the amount of permissible franchise fees. That section limits franchise fees to a maximum of 5 percent of a cable operator's gross revenues. It excludes from the definition of franchise fee:

1. in the case of any franchise in effect on October 30, 1984,

payments which the franchise requires the operator to make for, or in support of the use of, PEG facilities; and

2. in the case of franchises granted after October 30, 1984, capital costs which the franchise requires the operator to incur for PEG facilities.

For franchises granted after October 30, 1984, cash payments, other than for capital costs, which the franchise requires the operator to make to support access, must be treated as part of the franchise fee payment. Cable operators often argue during renewal that for franchises issued after October 30, 1984, the cost of providing access services can be treated as a payment "in-kind" and deducted from the franchise fee payment owed. The Cable Act, however, does not state that the operator has the right to treat provision of services as in-kind payments. Based on legislative history, there is a strong argument that access service requirements do not get counted against the franchise fee. The **House Report** underlying the 1984 Cable Act states, with respect to Section 622, that that section "defines as a franchise fee only monetary payments made by the cable operator, and does not include as a 'fee' any franchise requirements for the provisions of services, facilities, or equipment" (1984 U.S. Code Cong. & Admin. News 4655, 4702 (1984)). That Report adds: "In addition, any payments which a cable operator makes voluntarily relating to support of public, educational, and governmental access and which are not required by the franchise, would not be subject to the 5 percent franchise fee cap."

Effect of PEG Access on Subscriber

Rates and Itemization of Bills. The 1992 Cable Act requirement that the FCC establish basic service tier rate regulations provided for such regulations to "include standards to identify costs attributable to satisfying franchise requirements to support public, educational, and govern-

mental channels or the use of such channels or any other services required under the franchise" (Section 623(b)(4), 47 U.S.C. §543(b)(4)). The FCC adopted rules that provide that the costs attributable to satisfying franchise requirements shall include (47 CFR §76.925) the sum of (1) all per-channel costs for the number of channels used to meet franchise requirements for public, educational, and governmental channels, (2) any direct costs of

meeting such franchise requirements, and (3) a reasonable allocation of general and administrative overhead.

The FCC's determination of costs associated with meeting franchise requirements, including costs of PEG, is particularly significant because of language added by the 1992 Cable Act to Section 622(c), 47 U.S.C. §542(c), to provide that a cable operator may itemize, as a separate line item on subscriber's bills:

1. the amount of the total bill assessed to satisfy any requirements imposed on the cable operator by the franchise agreement to support public, educational, or governmental channels or the use of such channels,

2. the amount of any other fee, tax, assessment, or charge of any kind imposed by any governmental authority on the transaction between the operator and the subscriber.

In its rulemaking report and order released May 3, 1993, in MM Docket No. 92-266, the FCC explained (546; n. omitted):

[C]osts that are itemized include those that are direct and verifiable, as well as a reasonable allocation of overhead, and for PEG costs, the sum of the per-channel costs for the number of chan-

See FCC and PEG, page 17

More is Not Always Better

Making PEG Channels Work

by Daniel L. Brenner

The recent controversy in New York over the use of government channels by the mayor points up the importance of making every channel count on a cable system today. With scores of new cable networks fighting furiously for limited channel availability on cable systems, the glare of publicity surrounding New York City's **Crosswalks** access channels could not have been more timely.

Public, educational, and governmental (PEG) channels and cable television have grown up together. In the early days of the industry, public access was viewed as a distinctly new product offered by the system. The "electronic soap box" of public access provided, and continues to provide, a unique speech opportunity in communities for all comers. The use of cable to provide narrowband educational programming services was another distinctive feature of early PEG systems. And the desirability, for officials and some of the public alike, of seeing live or taped proceedings of local municipal deliberations on government channels, brought an entirely new information service to television.

Over time, just as cable systems have developed a greater sophistication and expanded offerings, so, too, have many PEG services become richer in the quality of their presentations as well as their integration into the offerings of the operator. As we know from NCTA's own **Local CableACE** awards and the **Alliance for Community Media's Hometown Awards**, many systems around the country present quality programming services offered from PEG program sources.

But as the New York City example shows, just as there is a bounty of quality on some cable systems, other access channels remain underutilized. Even worse, some are inadequately programmed when they are utilized.

In the 1980s, which was a period of relatively moderate growth in program networks, access channels did not have to

"prove themselves." They were considered an asset by many operators, a cost of doing business for others, and a regulatory check mark for regulators concerned that they were negotiating as demanding a franchise as could be obtained. What actually got aired was sometimes an afterthought. Quality was not always a goal.



Alliance photo
Daniel L. Brenner

This state of PEG *laissez faire* is over in many communities. As cable competes in a multichannel video marketplace, questions arise about making access channels carry their own in the video marketplace. Competing technologies like wireless cable (MMDS) and direct broadcast satellite (DBS) like **DirecTV** have no access

requirements, PEG or leased. Access channels that would otherwise be devoted to access can be used for popular new programming now available in the satellite marketplace.

Furthermore, when it comes to DBS, cable suffers by comparison in terms of the number of channels available to the subscriber. Operators and subscribers are naturally frustrated when they have to pay for underutilized PEG channels occupying space on a system that could be used to provide programming services available by satellite—most likely provided by DBS—that are desired by some viewers. This is specially aggravating when PEG services occupy many channels but offer no more than a few hours of original PEG programming a week, or find themselves endlessly repeating city council meetings in order to put something on the government channels.

In this environment, more is not necessarily better. What is better? PEG channels that are well programmed, occupy no more channels than are needed to do the job, are fully utilized with new

and diverse programming, and that integrate well into the overall offering of the system.

Today, systems that must leave open six or nine PEG channels but where there's no programming even offered to fill them, are systems that do not serve the subscribers well. Again, in precompetition days, this state of affairs might have been more tolerable as a necessary reality of public policy because the cable operator was often the sole multichannel video provider. Today, as we all know, subscribers do have choices. Whether it is an overbuilt system offered by a phone company, an MMDS service offering, or the ubiquitous direct satellite television, the subscriber does have a choice and is making it. PEG channels, effectively programmed, can be an asset to the cable operator.

But how often does this occur? The PEG community must not ignore the realities that cable operators face. And

franchising authorities must also not allow the slogan, "but we've always done it that way," to continue justifying unrealistic access requirements that, over time, have not proved themselves to be productive. To have PEG access, we need cable; to have cable, we must have a competitive multichannel product. That is the new reality of PEG programming today.

The NCTA's chairman this year, **Ted Turner**, is fond of the expression,

"lead, follow, or get out of the way." PEG programmers and administrators should heed these words. Access channels and access requirements that don't add to the quality of cable service need to be reexamined. PEG operators, like the technology that created them, can't ignore the changing market in which they find themselves.

Daniel L. Brenner is Vice President for Law & Regulatory Policy, National Cable Television Association.

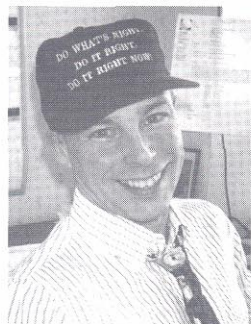
"To have PEG access, we need cable; to have cable, we must have a competitive multi-channel product. That is the new reality of PEG programming today."

From the Executive Director

Allowing PEG Channels to Work

by Barry Forbes

As usual, Dan Brenner of the National Cable Television Association (NCTA) and I agree on some points, and disagree on some other points. I offer four points of disagreement.



Alliance photo

Barry Forbes

First, we basically disagree as to what local cable operators are buying with their local franchise fees. Mr. Brenner suggests that "operators and subscribers are naturally frustrated when they have to pay for underutilized PEG channels occupying space on a

system that could be used to provide programming services available by satellite...." Let's be quite clear: operators are not paying for PEG access. They are paying the rent for the use of public property through which they string their cables. The property managers are the local elected officials and the landlords are the citizens of the community. The landlords, through their property managers, decide how to spend the collected rent money; an estimated 10 to 15 percent of the communities in America have chosen some form of PEG access service. Eliminating PEG access in a community would not necessarily decrease cable operators' franchise fees, but it would definitely open up a channel or two that would make the operator more money. Which brings me to my second point of disagreement.

We both agree on the importance of making every channel count on cable

television—or any other telecommunications network. And we agree that many access channels remain underutilized. However, we disagree on the solution. Mr. Brenner suggests that in a competitive marketplace the solution is to devote access channels to "popular new programming now available in the satellite marketplace." This would naturally allow cable operators to compete better with direct broadcasting satellite (DBS) television on their own turf. However, I propose that a more effective approach would be to carve out a truly competitive niche by offering unique local services, namely PEG access. However, the reason that the overwhelming number of access channels are underutilized is that they are underfunded and undercapitalized.

For example, according to Alliance research, the median annual operating budget of PEG access organizations is about \$125,000. (This is based on research conducted in 1993, with a base of 393 organizations reporting an annual budget.) On the other hand, PEG access

organizations provide their communities with a median of about 520 hours of original local programming per year. (This is based on the same research with 425 organizations reporting hours of local programming produced.) Even the NCTA can appreciate the cost effectiveness of a median cost of \$240 per hour of original programming!

The solution to the problem of underutilization is increased funding from local municipalities. This is where we have our work cut out for us. First, we need to convince telecommunications companies that local

programming is a competitive edge: they should not aggressively work against the

See *Allowing PEG to Work*, page 26...

Time Warner v. NYC

In November 1996, Judge Denise Cote, a federal judge in the Southern District of New York, issued a preliminary injunction in **Time Warner Cable v. New York City** that will effectively protect the city's public, educational, and governmental (PEG) access channels, the "public space" on cable television. These channels, dedicated to schools, city councils, local agencies, and the general public, in the words of Judge Cote, exist "to bring schools and government into the homes of the citizenry, facilitate better communication between educational and governmental institutions and the public, and meet the needs of its citizens left unaddressed by commercial programming."

At issue is whether the City of New York can turn over an entire non-commercial government access channel to the news service **Fox Cable News (FCN)**, owned by **Rupert Murdoch**, and the programming of **Bloomberg Business News**. Time Warner has protested this move—allegedly motivated by the interests of stockholder **Ted Turner** and FCN competitor **Cable News Network (CNN)**. Two borough presidents are opposing the City of New York's "gift" of the government access channel to FCN parent corporation, **News Corporation Inc.**

Time Warner argued before Judge Cote that the City was violating its First Amendment rights by "forcing speech"—that is, by forcing Time Warner to show Fox News on a governmental access channel against Time Warner's will. Judge Cote stated clearly that Time Warner has no direct First Amendment rights over the use of the PEG channels. As she stated, "Time Warner has no First Amendment right to editorial discretion over channels that it never had a right to use." This ruling follows naturally from the Supreme Court's ruling in **Denver**

See *Time Warner*, page 25...

Managing Access for Success

by Mary Bennin Cardona

What do people think a successful public access facility looks like? To answer that question, 50 access coordinators, cable television regulators, producers, and viewers were interviewed. Their answer? A successful access center is used heavily, produces programs reflecting the diversity of the community, and has a strong viewership. On the flip side, an access failure was underfunded, isolated, trained few residents, and produced few programs. How can an access center make itself into a success? It has to do with the facility's mission.

1. The mission must first of all strongly support the idea of public access. The facility must provide people with a nondiscriminatory opportunity to speak to a large public audience using the medium of television—a medium that would otherwise be closed to the public.

2. The public access facility must provide the community with an opportunity to listen to a diversity of views. In order to provide a true opportunity to the community, the center must encourage use.

a) The facility space and the production equipment must meet the demand for use. A typical center should have adequate studio space, separate post-production facilities, ample storage space for sets, and rooms to accommodate large groups of people. The space should have the feel of a public community building where people feel comfortable just walking in. The comfort of people should be prioritized over a highly technical look to the facility.

Equipment should be user friendly and able to serve the needs of people who are just learning video as well as those who are more experienced. This means that a facility should have everything from camcorders, to industrial-grade 3-chip cameras in a studio configuration, to digital effects, if affordable. Equipment maintenance should be a high-priority item in the budget. Users will quickly get discouraged by nonfunctioning equipment. Funders need to keep in mind that as

demand increases, more equipment will be needed to fulfill that demand.

b) The access center should have a supportive management structure that encourages use. The center should sponsor regular and frequent free public orientations to the facility that cover basic questions about how to use access. The center should provide frequent

opportunities to begin training at various levels. The beginning courses should simplify technology as much as possible. Courses should

include how to express oneself through video effectively, rather than only teaching people the rudiments of pushing buttons. The policies of the facility should keep paperwork and administrative hoops to a minimum, be administered fairly, and not be created in reaction to singular bad experiences without examining the broader impact of the change. Reservations should give producers ample time to do their production and post-production work. If you wonder what that might be, ask a cross-section of producers what seems reasonable. Centers should provide plenty of opportunities for success and recognition. Always have people available to provide

guidance and to minimize frustration. The bottom line is that management needs to create an atmosphere that makes people want to be there.

c) A public access facility needs to have an open and accessible nature in terms of its availability for use and its geographic location. The facility should have regular hours that include evening and weekend times. By-appointment-only arrangements create a closed atmosphere. Walk-in business should be accepted as the schedule allows. Facilities should be accessible and usable by the handicapped wherever reasonably possible. The facility should be centrally located in the community served or, if there are multiple facilities, located in geographically dispersed areas. The center needs to be in a busy public area where there are other community institutions and businesses and where people feel safe. Prominent signage helps community awareness of its existence. Staff members must exude an attitude of welcoming and openness to all comers. The facility must remain financially accessible to all in the community. This does not rule out fees. The center needs to be able to accommodate a variety of programmatic styles in a timely manner, including live programming, call-in programs, and simple technical setups for those who do not want to learn a lot of

See *Frontline Strategies*, page 19...

"...management needs to create an atmosphere that makes people want to be there."

Outreach Success Stories



Alliance photo
Bob Devine

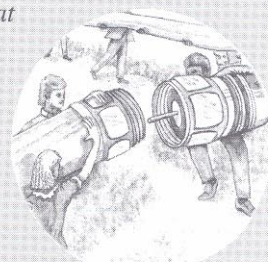
plans or strategies that produced interesting results, that brought groups or issues or neighborhoods into public access programming, that helped raise community

by Bob Devine

Several months ago I posted the following query to the Alliance listserv. "I'd like to ask folks out there to share their 'outreach success stories' with us, those ideas or

awareness, that built constituent involvement, that contributed to the community, etc. We'd like to put together a selection of outreach approaches and activities that really worked as a way of helping other centers to think about building support in their own communities."

Two of the many responses we received are included in this edition of *CMR*.



Lessons From Greensboro

Building Community Support

by Sally Alvarez

Launching an access channel is like launching an untested boat in stormy waters. Will it float? Will it leak? Will the crew jump ship? Will Jaws appear just ahead of Hurricane Fran? That's just how we felt in Greensboro, NC, in October of 1996 when we launched our new public access channel for the citizens of Greensboro: **Cable 8**. When the mayor broke a (prop) bottle of champagne (confetti) over a TV set in the middle of downtown Greensboro, it was a culmination of five years of sweat, tears, and hope for dozens of access supporters.

We breathed a sigh of relief that day as the confetti flew, but we know we are engaged in a long-term campaign. We had helped navigate the city through a tortuous contract renegotiation with **Cablevision (Time Warner)** that had resulted in an agreement promising the community \$475,000 in start-up money for a new access operation. We were lucky to have a farsighted mayor and city council who saw through the hype about controversial programming and believed in the importance of a free speech forum on local TV. The new contract, signed in October of 1994, also granted the community moderate operating funds for the 10-year contract duration. Cablevision had agreed to assign separate channels to public, educational, and governmental access, and to turn over operation of the new public access channel to a community board charged with setting up a nonprofit corporation to manage it. After considerable political wrangling among city council members, the new board was finally appointed in May of 1995, and met for the first time in June.

Fifteen months later, **Greensboro Community Television, Inc. (GCTV)** had a dynamic new executive director, a staff, a newly renovated and equipped facility, and was ready to launch Greensboro's new access operation with

its slogan, "A New Face For Cable 8."

The Obstacles. Building community support for public access television had been the guiding principle of all our work leading up to that day. We had several strikes against us. We have a 15-year legacy of an access channel that was operated by **Cablevision (TWE)** before our takeover. Channel 8 had been a mixed "catch-all" channel with a hodgepodge of commercial programming, a few school system shows, and City Council meetings. There was no outreach, little training, old cranky equipment, and very poor technical quality. Community producers who managed to get programs on the channel were generally either stalwart religious programmers or entrepreneurs who used the channel to develop their own unique brand of commercial public affairs. The channel had also attracted a few local musicians, and a

couple of vanity video performers whose sophomoric antics had mobilized the more vocal elements of Greensboro's relatively conservative community to call for banning the channel altogether.

We also had experienced a somewhat uncooperative attitude from the local press which, when it paid attention at all, seemed always to be interested in the "kooks and crazies" angle. We even met several times with the newspaper about their editorial policy,

which opposed the expansion of the access channels. This hostility is nothing new to access veterans. We have continued to work for a relationship with the press in

which we are not seen as competition, but as partners on Greensboro's media scene. We know this will only change over time as the programming improves and the diversity of the community can actually be seen on the channel.

A New Face for Cable 8. When we got ready to plan the launch of the new channel,

we knew we had to take advantage of the publicity "boost" we could get from the switch-over to GCTV management and the new "look" of the channel. We wanted to pull together diverse elements of the community to solve some of the problems mentioned above. We decided to "launch" the channel with as much fanfare as possible. We set the launch for early September, based upon when we thought the new facility would be ready. We eventually had to bump it to early October due to construction and equipment delays, but the launch planning actually began in April. Even though our budget is very limited, we decided to hire an event coordinator to help with the details of the plan, and she proved to be invaluable. She took a lot of the burden off volunteer board members for mailings, publicity, and coordinating the events themselves. She particularly focused on working with the community at large and with the media. In addition, she made it possible for **Executive Director Karen Toering** to concentrate on the renovation and equipping of the new facility that was happening at exactly the same time the launch activities swung into high gear. We had several components for our plan:

First we created a launch committee of prominent and active citizens plus



Photo courtesy GCTV

GCTV Board members are all smiles at the opening of the new access facility in downtown Greensboro. L-R: Michael Coleman, President Laura Linder, E.D. Karen Toering, Sally Alvarez and Bailey Hobgood.



Photo courtesy GCTV

E.D. Karen Toering (L) greets guests at the opening reception of the channel launch, including Epilepsy Association E.D. Dixie Hodge (R), one of Channel 8's pioneer programmers.

See *Building*, page 20...

West Allis, Wisconsin

The Road to Renewal

by Mary Shanahan-Spanic

To begin describing the (comparatively) successful refranchising result in West Allis, Wisconsin, a suburb bordering on Milwaukee, it is necessary to look back and reflect on the history of community television in this formerly blue-collar community.

The original 1980 premise and design for access facilitation in West Allis was a faulty one. The cable company would provide the equipment, training, and facilitation, and a not-for-profit, community-based board, the **West Allis Community Communications Corporation (WACCC)**, initially appointed by the mayor, would provide grants to individual producers, offer input on policies governing the public's use of the equipment, and promote the channel. WACCC would receive \$25,000, or one and one-half percent of the gross revenues. The funding was over and above the three percent franchise fee that was going to the city.

Besides awarding grants, WACCC spent about \$4500 a year on printing the channel listings in a local paper. It also spent a lot of money on rent, furniture, and attending conferences, even though it was not a direct service provider. The organization did not become tax exempt until 1991. Over the years the government ate a substantial amount of resources.

The volunteer programmers felt the organization was not open to their input, did not encourage dues-paying members, had no direct influence over the cable company policies that were governing their production activity, was misguided, and met behind closed doors.

The programmers formed their own volunteer organization, the **West Allis Community Programmers Association**. After complaints to the city filed by the programmers association regarding WACCC operating procedures and some embarrassing local newspaper articles, eventually some of the programmers were

elected or appointed to the WACCC board. Things began to change

In 1988, after years of disinterest, the city demanded an audit be performed by **Peat Marwick**. Certain problems were officially identified and recommendations made that provided a change of direction for the organization. From then on, the city kept a keen eye on WACCC.

Community Access Resources. In the original cable contract, two commu-

nity-based studios—one to be located in a school and one to be located at the cable company and shared with local organizations—were to be built. The proposal included hiring five full-time staff members.

The studio at the cable company was provided, and “one and one-half staff people” were made avail-

able to facilitate all access activities, including manual playback. The cable company said they didn't need to provide more staff because there was little demand. Yet, if someone called to reserve the combined studio/editor, it was always booked. Trainers had to leave workshops to change the playback tapes. No meeting rooms or common areas were provided to plan, socialize, or monitor the channel. There was a remote truck available, but workshops were few and far between. The portable tube cameras purchased in 1980 had such a lag problem that when you moved the camera it looked as if you were dissolving from one shot to another. All of these obstacles led to disappointment, which led to a fall-off in volunteer programmers and the number of shows produced.

In 1991, the WACCC Board really got focused. They filed for tax-exempt status and hired their first staff person. The new executive director began to push the cable company and the city on the issues brought forward by the programmers.

Yet the city had little or no interest in keeping tabs on the cable company's performance.

The executive director of WACCC

managed to alienate the cable company, the mayor, the city administrator, the cable administrator, and even the president of the WACCC board who had hired him. The situation escalated to the point that the city was on the verge of shutting down the organization and bringing its function inside City Hall.

This is when I entered the picture. I began as executive director of WACCC in March of 1993 and undertook the job of developing a strategy that would reestablish trust on the part of the City of West Allis and instill a perception of credibility in the community.

Rebuilding Confidence in WACCC. The first thing I did was meet individually with city officials, cable company staff, and school district people in an attempt to establish rapport. I assured them that I appreciated and understood each of their perspectives, that WACCC wanted to work cooperatively, and that public access, when managed effectively, can serve and benefit all concerned parties, especially the community. I sensed the skepticism on their part, based on past history, but the door was opened to the possibility of progress and forward movement.

The next thing I initiated was a monthly computerized **Treasurer's Report** and **Executive Director's Report**. The report covered outreach and training activities, **WACCC Committee Activity Reports**, equipment utilization, and new program information. Since the city has oversight authority for WACCC, our business is their business. The more they knew, the better they could understand and support our mission and function. I met monthly with the City of West Allis's Cable Administrator. I shared the good and the bad, the challenges, the successes, and the heartbreaks.

I also started to meet and work with the leaders of many West Allis organizations, including the **Chamber of Commerce**, the **League of Women Voters**, and the **West Allis Charities**. I also produced a monthly live call-in show with the then-mayor of West Allis **John Turck**.

People in the city became aware of who I was, what my agenda was, what
See The Road to Renewal, page 22...

Missoula, Montana

Successful PEGotiations

by Randy Ammon

In July of this year, **Missoula Community Access Television (MCAT)**, a nonprofit PEG access organization, signed a new contract with the **City of Missoula, Montana**. Community support was a major factor in this agreement that features a 40 percent increase in our original funding from franchise fees, a term of four years (with annual cost-of-living increases), and significant money for new equipment. Here's a summary of our successful actions/strategies, pitfalls to be avoided, and lessons learned.

MCAT was incorporated in 1988 following a decade of community outreach. A diverse and spirited group of community members (lotza folks over lotza years) researched access operations elsewhere, rounded up hundreds of local organizations as potential users/beneficiaries, and convinced elected leaders to negotiate franchises with cable operators for the primary purpose of establishing community access television. A key resource was (and continues to be) **Alliance for Community Media** networking, which led us to participate in regional conferences, study **CMR**, and pick the brains of as many access professionals and volunteers as possible. The telephone and the U.S. Postal Service used to be the communication resources of choice; now the **Alliance Electronic Mailing Lists** are an excellent and effective tool that we should all be using.

The **MCAT Board of Directors** is a self-selected group of 15 members. This number struck me as unwieldy at first, but actually works quite well. Our board has always been a cross section of our community, highly diverse and hard working, with a collective commitment to the First Amendment. A level of credibility for the organization was established early by having a board that included educators, artists, clergy, writers, attorneys, business owners, a disgruntled postal employee/filmmaker, the general manager of Missoula's **CBS** affiliate TV station, and "just plain folks."

MCAT's first contract with the city was for five years beginning in January 1989. We received a flat \$100,000 per year

from franchise fees collected. Staff was hired, equipment was purchased, a studio was created, and the outreach/public relations continued through meetings with targeted constituencies, luncheon speeches, cordial relations with local news media, and a snazzy logo (on hats, shirts, bumper stickers, etc.).

By the time training workshops began in March 1990, Missoulians were chomping at the bit; I have never seen a community so ripe for access. In our city with a population of 42,000, over 500 people attended basic training workshops in the first year, and to date, more than 1 out of every 20 persons in our community has participated in workshops!

MCAT programming premiered on Earth Day of 1990, with a lineup heavy with environmental and cultural issues. Our credibility and popularity were enhanced during the first month of programming with live remote cablecasts from **Missoula Public Library** and the **University of Montana** featuring the mayor, a county commissioner, **Walter Mondale**, **Ralph Nader**, and other familiar faces. Live city council and school board meetings became staples on our single combined PEG channel, and public access producers grew increasingly creative and prolific.

All was progressing wonderfully. We kept the involved elected officials informed, publicized MCAT services and accomplishments, hosted a regional conference, and expanded our fund-raising efforts, program schedule, and staff. MCAT developed into a very successful model access operation. So, when it came time for our contract renewal with the city in 1993, we naively expected to be rewarded for a job well done. Instead, we were sucked into a political firestorm on account of the fact that the main compo-

nents of the city council had changed.

MCAT's anticipated contract renegotiation never happened. Instead, the council issued a request for proposals (RFP), hoping to drum up competition. We spent a lot of time and energy putting together a comprehensive proposal; no

others were submitted.

MCAT supporters were numerous, diverse, and active, but to no avail.

Eventually council rejected the MCAT proposal because we "asked for too much money"—we sought the maximum amount of funding specified in the RFP (75 percent of franchise fees) in exchange for new services.

We were certainly willing to negotiate, but the council refused and issued a second RFP, with funding limited to the amount of five years

earlier. Again MCAT turned in the only response and again we wasted considerable time and money. The entire contract/RFP process covered nine months and resulted in a new contract that was a punitive step backwards: more services required for the same amount of funding.

The best result of this city council treatment was the reaction by the community at large. People who were indifferent about MCAT became more informed and supportive based on the unfair treatment that we received, and MCAT has become a true campaign issue for every city election since then. Support of MCAT was written into the plank of Missoula's **New Party**, and New Party-endorsed progressive candidates have been elected to six of the twelve council seats. Of course, all candidates are made aware of the equal access available for them on MCAT, and all appear on the channel at least in the pre-election debates, but with few exceptions, the concept of PEG-access television is more fully embraced here by the more liberal city leaders.

See *Successful PEGotiations*, page 24...



Photo courtesy MCAT
Missoula-area volunteers at the MCAT studios.

Funding for Access Centers

Earned Income Strategies

by R. Vincent Hamilton.

Earned income. You've heard about it, you dread it, you hate the very thought. But if you're in the business of running a nonprofit public, educational, or governmental access center, then earned income might be just what you need.

Earned income revenues are generally regarded as those revenues that come from sources other than grants, donations, fundraising events, and government contracts.

Things that I count as earned income are sources such as sales of products and services, user fees, and fines. At my public access center, **Access Houston Cable Corporation**, we are generating about 30 percent of our revenues from earned income sources.

Some of the highest sources of earned

income for our center are sales of video production services, fees for equipment rental (both cameras and edit suites), sales of classes and workshops, videotape sales, tape duplication fees, and membership

fees. In FY96, we generated \$184,000 from these sources.

Why is there a need for earned income? I can think of at least four reasons:

1) The cost of doing business is always present and growing. The highest operating cost, of course, is usually manpower. Personnel expenses always tend to

increase as your staff increases in experience and seniority and as the cost of living increases.

Also, if you have old equipment, maintenance and repair expenses will increase steadily the older the equipment gets. Conversely, if you plan to upgrade your equipment, that, too, will require a

major allocation of revenue. Then you can add the ever-present cost of legal and accounting services, telephones, insurance, utilities, etc.

2) Government and political leaders always seem to have a level of angst about public access and free speech. Even in communities where there is a lot of support for public access, we always seem to be just one controversy away from the panic button down at city hall. With government retrenchment in vogue, access centers need to be prepared to deal with the vagaries of politics.

3) There is a lot of competition in the unearned income arena. With corporate mergers and acquisitions, and with a greater corporate emphasis on educational activities and environmental issues, grants for media and video-related projects are very competitive.

Traditional fund-raising is also increasingly difficult because of competition from social service and health-related agencies that vie heavily for those donations.

4) Lastly, with the telecommunications industry turned topsy-turvy, who knows what will happen to cable companies versus the telephone companies, DBS operators, and other technology sectors. All telecommunications companies are facing dramatic change in the foreseeable future, so access centers certainly need to buttress themselves for any and all possibilities. The best thing of all about earned income is that the monies generated are nonrestricted. You can target them where you need them or where you want them. With earned income, your agency will have complete autonomy and independence. It is money that you make for yourself and, therefore, it can't be taken back or cut off (by anyone other than your customers). Also, earned income revenues garner a great deal of respect from your clients, government funders, and other donors. It shows that you are willing to make an investment in yourself.

To institute an earned income strategy, essentially you'll need to do a simple business plan to ensure that you will make more money than you spend. First, you

See *Earned Income*, page 25...

"The best thing of all about earned income is that the monies generated are nonrestricted."

Outreach JCTV

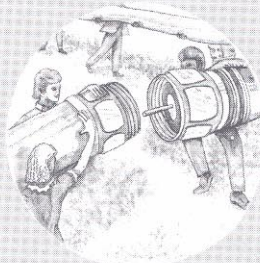
by Art Gerhard

We have been told by dozens of community people here in Jefferson City, Montana, that with the success of the access channel it would be hard for anyone to turn it off. Currently at **JCTV Channel 3**, we have logged 3500 local programs (no repeats in that number), and there are 30 local groups using the channel on a weekly basis. Why?

I think there are a number of reasons, but the one that comes to mind is an experiment we tried five years ago. We established as part of our studio training class the opportunity for local nonprofit groups and area residents to come into the studio and create a show. The people in the training class served as crew. If there were no confident directors in the class, a staff member would serve as director. The class benefited by working hands-on producing a program. The community group got a program without first committing to the 12-week learning cycle. The groups got direct feedback from the community (people commenting that they saw the program).

Sometimes this inspires the groups to create regular programs. Sometimes individuals from the groups get involved with the access center separately from the organization that brought them in. Word spreads in the community about opportunities at the access channel. In addition, we get another community program. The community groups usually invite community leaders on their programs. They get exposed to what we do. They see lots of community volunteers taking training and creating a valuable and positive contribution to the city. When controversial programs play on the channel, we already have a balance established. I believe this generic community forum program has been a tremendous success and serves as an effective outreach and public relations tool.

Art Gerhard. e-mail: ggerhard@mail.coin.missouri.edu



Adding to Access Revenues

Cultivating Funding Resources

by Ron Cooper

In these times of financial “belt-tightening” and “focused priorities”, here’s three cents worth of advice (and worth every penny!).

\$.01) Keep your wits about you when evaluating partnerships;

\$.02) Cultivate a climate of cooperation and your sense of humor; and

\$.03) Go slowly if you’ve never been there before.

These few words point to skills you must practice if you wish to generate revenue from any source. They further the process of initiating successful partnerships with like-minded community groups, demonstrate your reliability and trustworthiness as a partner organization, and re-enforce the old cliché, “if it seems too good to be true, it probably is.”

Go With What You Know: All Access is Locally Funded. If you can’t make a successful case for local funding, few outside agencies will take your application seriously. Before seeking funds from organizations with no understanding of PEG access, have you considered how best to maximize your relationship with the local funding authority? PEG access must continue to receive its base grant from franchise revenues to survive. The following suggestions are merely “augmentations.” The grim reality is: your days are numbered if you bite the hand that feeds you.

a) Have you made your best case to the local franchise authority? It is critical that your group stay on excellent terms with those with oversight of your operations, if at all possible. Criticism from the body regulating and/or funding your group effectively discourages other nonprofits from further involvement.

b) Are there training or programming services you might render to local government? Some entities will consider augmenting your grant if additional services are considered high priorities.

c) Is there programming you can “encourage” that enlightens or uplifts your community? Even if it’s only food for the volunteer crew, small donations that allow you to “do the right thing” with selected, high-visibility programming can be

advantageous to your group’s financial bottom-line and solidify your base of local support when your grant is being evaluated.

d) Do you regularly report to the franchise authority the good works you are accomplishing? Do you help them support you and, in turn, make it easy for local leaders to encourage your search for additional funding? Do local elected officials receive your Board packet, newsletter, etc.? Do you regularly ask your producers and viewers to write thank-you letters to local leadership? If not, why not? Don’t take this funding source for granted.

e) Is your Board and your producer community helping or hindering the maintenance of your greatest revenue stream, the franchise grant? Is your organization’s public voice “strident and righteous because we are the voice of the people,” or is your group “constantly striving to balance the best interests of the entire community?” As an elected official, which voice would you support? Counsel your Board and the producer community in the fine art of winning friends and positively influencing the local political establishment.

Do You Work to Be Your Cable Company’s “Buddy”? PEG will probably never enjoy the cable industry’s acceptance as a valuable programming partner but we should not stop in our continuing efforts to show them the error of these outdated attitudes. Local programming distinguishes cable from the competition. *PEG is LOCAL.* Keeping your sense of humor is critical.

a) Are there programs your group can produce with excellent local content and consistently high technical standards? Have you considered approaching cable management with the proposal to have the cable company’s ad sales staff seek out businesses and “sell” program underwriting to local firms? Keep within your access underwriting guidelines and let the businesses know these aren’t commercials,

just support for unique “home town television.” The two organizations—your access group and the cable company—then divide the revenue. Our local cable company is considering this. Remember the new mantra for the 90s is: “Greed is not good, but secure funding for PEG access is.”

b) Are you making the best use of the cable company for promotional purposes? Have you supplied access promos to run on other channels? Will the cable company highlight programming or your services in their published cable guide? Keep asking for such opportunities. Memories are short

(“Oh, you mean you wanted the promo repeated several times...why didn’t you say so?”)

c) Have you identified local events the cable company is financially underwriting and asked for their help in covering the hard costs of producing it as a program? The cable industry spends

hundreds of thousands of dollars in support of high-visibility, worthwhile organizations and their events, but never thinks to videotape them. Remind them of this missed opportunity. If there are a few bucks from the cable company or a local business to help you bring in a top notch crew, what a wonderful opportunity for joint cooperation

Do you regularly report your activities to the cable company? Do they receive your Board packet, newsletter, etc.? Anticipate their need for information: be forthcoming, not isolated or defensive. This open type of relationship can encourage collective problem solving rather than a never ending “blame game.”

Are Your Members Contributing?

Across-the-board, equitable membership dues are preferable to other revenue sources such as “rental fees” for use of equipment. Memberships are simple to administer, easy to understand, and fair to all. Any form of rental fee equates to “more money equals more speech.” Our

See *Adding to Access*, page 16...

**“The grim reality is:
your days are
numbered
if you bite
the hand
that feeds you.”**

Chicago Style

The Evolution of a PR Campaign

by Barbara Popovic

Slogans. I've been fretting over them for as long as I've worked in public access. By now I could paper a wall or stuff a large hole with them. "Don't Just View it, Do it." "CAN TV: It's What You Make It." "Watch Yourself Chicago." They pop up, appear on some publications, T-Shirts, mugs, maybe an ad or two. We feel good about it for a while. And then the questions start. Why are we targeting users when we have a waiting list? Why are we using a passive viewing message? Why are we saying CAN TV and not **Chicago Access Network Television**, or public access television, or community access television? Then the slogan is dropped and we're sloganless for a while, and we keep telling our story the long way. And people keep asking us questions: why is this stuff on anyway? Who uses this? Does anyone watch? Who Cares?

"Who cares?" That was the question **Melody Douglas-Tate** asked me years ago when I first started talking to her about public access. After my fervent explanation, Melody said, "What you're saying is exciting, I'm excited about it. But who knows about this, who understands it? Who cares?"

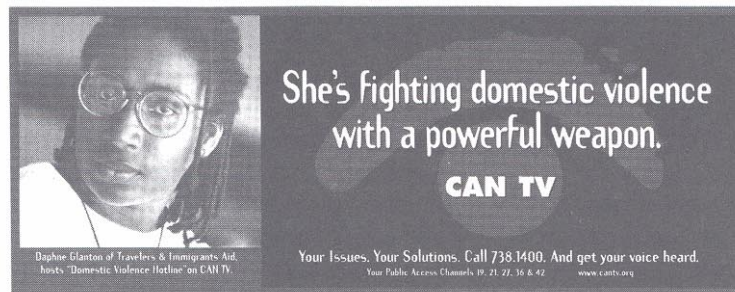
Melody is the Senior Vice President of Planning and Research for **Leo Burnett Co. Inc.**, a six billion-dollar advertising agency with clients like **Kraft, Oldsmobile, Miller** and **McDonald's**. Melody is used to probing by asking difficult questions, and her method of learning more about CAN TV was no exception. Not satisfied to stop with my explanations, she agreed to help us dig deeper and find out more about awareness of CAN TV. In 1994, Leo Burnett Company conducted a survey to assess awareness and perceived value of CAN TV. The questions for the survey were partly drawn from an exercise that Melody recommended we complete. We listed CAN TV's target audiences: nonprofits, government officials, viewers, community groups, etc. We then took each audience

through four questions:

- What is the current belief?
- What is the desired belief?
- What is the current behavior?
- What is the desired behavior?

A target group will have a number of different beliefs and behaviors. For example, one viewpoint of government officials might be:

- Current belief: This is nice but who really needs it?
- Desired belief: This is the one media that my constituents and I can use



when we need it.

Current behavior: Vote to decrease regulation to keep cable companies profitable.

Desired behavior: Vote to fund and protect public access TV in the future.

Once the questionnaire was in place, telephone interviews were completed with 419 cable subscribers between the ages of 18 and 64. The survey results showed that among cable households in Chicago, 65 percent had "heard of a group of public access channels called Chicago Access Network or CAN TV." That left 35 percent who had never heard of CAN TV and 57 percent who had heard of CAN TV but said they were not very, or not at all, familiar with CAN TV. That meant a significant opportunity for us to increase awareness.

What else is new? We're always trying to increase awareness. We educate people constantly about who we are, why we exist, what we offer. There are those who "get it." We have our friends. We have our political allies. What we accomplish less frequently is widespread public awareness that goes beyond the marginalizing "Wayne's World" notions of

public access.

One of our outreach strategies at CAC has been to educate people who have access to a lot of other people. So we focus on umbrella groups, nonprofit groups, associations, technical assistance providers. Public relations consultants are another one of these groups that are of particular importance because their effectiveness is based on their ability to get media exposure for their clients.

Recently, the **Chicago Transit Authority (CTA)** needed to promote the opening of a new train line and we were approached by **Bill Natale**, a PR consultant working on the CTA's media promotions. Having visited our facility, Bill saw CAN TV's audience as an important target for the CTA. We were invited to enter a barter arrangement valued at \$10,000 enabling CAN TV to use ad space on the

back of 60 buses for a month in exchange for running a CTA public service announcement promoting the new train line. We chose August for the promotion.

It was perfect. August, Chicago: **Democratic Convention**. CAN TV's message on buses all over town. Great. The timing couldn't have been better. A third cable company had signed a franchise agreement in June. It was anticipated that **Ameritech** would file an application soon after (they filed in August). And the window for refranchising of the current agreements was open, marking the beginning of a two-year process that would determine the future of public access in Chicago. The campaign would help set the tone in the months to come. Now we just had to figure out what to say. I could feel that slogan demon coming at me again. Happily for us, Melody had taken another step, or leap, having been elected to the CAC Board of Directors just that winter. She joined the PR committee in time to take the lead on the CTA bus campaign.

We went to work—**Takumi Iseda** and I from CAC, Melody and **Tina Hill** from Burnett's research team, and **Bill Lai** and
See Chicago Style, page 18...

1997: The Next Mile of the Marathon

Continued from page 4

1980s, the overall increase in the last 18 months would still be astounding.

The media play on the fears of those of us who have retirement plans based on stocks, yet we scarcely make the stock roadmap. According to a **Brookings Institute** study, the top 5 percent of stock owners own 77 percent of the equity holdings; the bottom 80 percent (those of us with stock-based retirement plans) own less than 2 percent.

Everybody talks about creating jobs. Jobs are good. Yet the media dwell on the need for 6 percent unemployment: we hear horror stories of inflation if the number is lower. With low unemployment, the Federal Reserve raises interest rates, the precious Dow Jones falls, and unemployment rises. So in this instance, jobs are bad.

Why? Guaranteed six percent unemployment is a readily available cheap labor source—workers chasing jobs with

low pay, corporations reaping high profits.

Compare unemployment to the treatment of CEO pay and the booming stock market. Where were the fears of inflation with double-digit CEO pay increases, 1995 record corporate profits, and a Dow Jones increase greater than 30 percent? I heard no reports that these clear

winners were runaway double-digit agents of inflation.

Despite this constant diet of media diversion from issues of power, fairness, and justice, the American people are showing resilience. There is a growing gap between the media headlines and public opinion.

Business Week cites a

“stunning 95% to 5% majority” of the public believes corporations should “sacrifice some profit for the sake of making things better for their workers and communities.”

We see growing distrust of corporate America. The gap between what the media reports and what Americans actually feel is also growing.

Our country needs media that is community based, allows people to tell their own stories, is not dependent on selling designer jeans—a media which captures the essence of *Kia'i Kaleo*.

We need community media for our democracy to work, for equal opportunity to become a reality, for the disenfranchised and disinvested to once again participate.

We need community media to achieve liberty and justice for all. Yet to do so, community media must be used to discuss and provide information on the most relevant and powerful heartstring issues of the day.

In reality, in a system with such gross inequity

of power and wealth, we have our work cut out for us—that's the bad news. The good news is that with growth and development, the Alliance is just the group to do it.

We have the vision of federal legislation to ensure meaningful access to dominant media.

We have great communities across the nation filled with organizations and individuals who need a presence on the dominant media to stay vital.

We have media centers, program providers, channels, and equipment.

We just need to organize the amazing strength represented by those who currently use and who will increasingly need our training, channels, and facilities in the future. *That's a big job, but what a reward!*

As we work together for this noble cause, we will empower our communities to carve out a meaningful presence in the dominant media. And when media serves the people, we can again make *community* the building block of our culture.

Alan Bushong is Chair of the Alliance for Community Media.

“When media serves the people, we can again make *community* the building block of our culture.”

Alliance News

1997 International Conference & Trade Show

The 1997 International Conference and Trade Show will be held July 9–12, 1997 at the **Milwaukee Hilton**. Call (202) 393-2650 for information.

Editorial Board

The Editorial Board of the Alliance for Community Media meets via conference call every third Thursday at noon eastern time to discuss the progress of upcoming issues of *Community Media Review*.

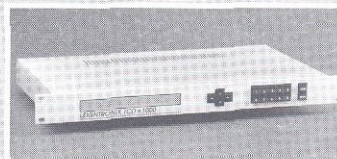
If you or someone you know would like to participate in the Editorial Board, perhaps even be Editor-in-Chief of an upcoming issue, contact Editorial Board Chair **Dirk Koning** at **GRTV**, 50 Library Plaza NE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503-3219. Phone: (616) 459-4788 ext. 101; fax: (616) 459-3970 ext. 123; or e-mail: dirk@grmc.org.

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Adding to Access Revenues

Continued from page 13

access center has implemented mandatory membership for anyone to take classes, use equipment, or submit programming. In two years, I have yet to meet one producer who complained. Think about it: how can you ask for "community" financial support if your members—those who benefit most from your direct services—don't contribute to the cause?

Are You Adequately Staffed to Handle the Task? People get funny when you lose sight of their money.

Too often PEG centers are unprepared for the lengthy application process. Also, beware of what you ask for because you just might get it! Many centers discover all too quickly that the administration of the grant is even more challenging than the application. If you fail to report your activities and expenditures adequately, you risk losing more than the remaining grant funds.

You may lose your reputable name in the local community and alienate other nonprofit friends. Take a few precautions before engaging in grantsmanship.

a) Expertise and time: do you have enough of these precious commodities to adequately track your new revenue streams, report them to the proper authorities, and have a long-range plan to use them wisely? If not, get help before proceeding.

b) Seek out computer software to help track membership dues, grant expenditures, invoicing for services rendered, etc.

c) Do you have a bookkeeping service or a C.P.A. to do your annual financial audit? Widen the scope of their contracted services and enlist their aid in the "do's and don't's" of grant funding.

d) Look to your Board for help in recruiting knowledgeable volunteers from the business community. Your Board members may have such expertise and were just waiting for you to ask. But if not, ask them to help you identify others.

e) Hire a development director, even part time, to seek out and administer new revenue. Realize that grant writers who work on a commission basis are not necessarily knowledgeable regarding your group's needs and may secure revenue—any type of revenue. Keep control of the process. This is essential.

If you are the grants administrator and access manager, allow for the necessary time away from your normal day-to-day responsibilities. If you don't have the time or expertise, proceed with caution. There is no such thing as "free money," and the strings attached could strangle you and pull down the entire organization.

f) Beware of fundraising events! Evaluate the expenditure of scarce human resources and compare this "cost" to the anticipated revenue to be gained. Small

financial gains or even losses are acceptable if "psychic revenue" can be justified. But hundreds of hours of well intentioned but misguided staff and volunteer labor can detract from, not further, the mission of the access organization. Avoid giving overall authority to a well intentioned but inexperienced volunteer. Their help is essential in so many ways, but overall coordination for a major

event can be too much for the novice with limited administrative resources.

Perhaps an independent contractor to organize specific fundraising events for an established, negotiated fee is a better way to go. With an independent, you can seek out and negotiate specific services and expectations. Seek professionals with a track record, if possible.

Unfortunately, excuses for well intentioned, but very public, fundraising failures usually fall on deaf ears. One fundraising embarrassment can tarnish your image in the community for years to come.

Business and Community Underwriting of Access Programs May Be Your "Golden Goose." Communities not served by commercial electronic media may find local businesses hungry to financially support PEG access and "local TV" with underwriting messages. Underwriting messages can also be included in print (your newsletter), on the Internet (your Home Page), on decals on vehicles (your truck), in fundraising events (your fundraisers), in doo-dads (your doo-dads).

Productions for Hire and Public Access are Worlds apart: Is Coexistence Possible? Personally, I believe it is extremely difficult to achieve the mission of PEG access and generate significant production income by using essentially the

same facility. When the fantasy of "big TV bucks" enters the discussion, common sense leaves the room. That said, we manage to generate about 10 percent of our budget annually by creating programs for other noncommercial, nonprofit groups and government or educational institutions. Be careful to keep public access hours and equipment use separate from revenue-generating projects. The priority of the access operation is to create community programming at little or no expense.

Reality check: Television production personnel, including your dedicated access staff members, enjoy producing television programs; that's one of the reasons you hired them in the first place. However, (are you sitting down?), access staffers may prefer the "paid, higher visibility" projects over the "daily grind" of public access facilitation and training. ("Explain to me one more time how my edited program lost that "synch" thing?") Be ready to administer these personnel resources carefully or your staff may lose sight of the organization's mission to serve the community's agenda.

a) If you have staff members who do both types of projects well, keep them happy, for they are the exception rather than the rule.

b) Negotiate flat rates with an independent contractor, if appropriate, for the entire project rather than hourly charges for rental of your organization's equipment and staff. An experienced independent contractor can use their equipment (camera) in combination with your gear (editing) in "non-public" hours. Choose this person carefully. Cooperative ventures can bring success to both the producer and the organization with the hope of more to come. Disgruntled independent television producers can rally disgruntled volunteer producers into a formidable tag team and your best intentions will be assailed in a most public way.

c) Cultivate your relationship with the local independent production community. Clarify you only work in noncommercial or public sector projects that often don't have an existing budget that could afford their special and quite professional expertise (\$1,750 per finished minute ... pleeeasse!). Access doesn't do weddings

See Adding to Access, next page...

FCC and PEG

Continued from page 5
nels used to meet franchise requirements. Therefore, to the extent a franchising authority imposes special costs not of benefit to all subscribers in consideration of the award or renewal of a franchise, these may be included in an itemization as either a franchise fee or PEG cost, as appropriate under the precedents.

The determination of costs associated with PEG, as well as other costs of meeting franchise requirements, are also significant because they qualify as "external" costs under the FCC's benchmark rate regulation scheme. That benchmark regulation provides for an FCC-established price cap formula under which requested increases may not exceed general inflation except for increases in external costs that are beyond the cable operator's control. Cable operators are required to reflect any decreases in external costs at the time of any increase, to reflect decreases in the annual inflation adjustment, and to file revised rates to reflect decreases in external costs no later than one year from when such decreases occur. (See "First Order on Reconsideration, Second Report and Order, and Third Notice of Proposed Rulemaking," released Aug. 27, 1993 in MM Docket No. 92-266, 123.)

Because costs related to PEG access requirements that are required by a franchise agreement are treated as external costs for rate-making purposes, a new dimension is added to franchise renewal. Remember that external costs affect rates only to the extent that they are changed from the levels then in existence, starting with those in effect at the time rate regulation begins. Thus, if no change is made in a renewal franchise in the amount of channel capacity provided or in the amount of support for PEG access, there will be no effect on rates. To the extent that a cable operator makes payments or provides equipment or facilities to a third party (such as a nonprofit access center) that are not required by the franchise, such costs would not be external costs and therefore would not affect rates.

James N. Horwood is an attorney with the Washington, D.C. firm Spiegel & McDiarmid.

Adding to Access Revenues

Continued from previous page
"for-hire." Use good judgment in this regard or your efforts to generate new income can tarnish your image in the business and production community.

d) Renting your equipment to community producers is not public access television. Don't do it unless you have exhausted all other viable funding alternatives. Elaborate rate rebate structures are confusing and can be counterproductive because they will always be questioned on issues of fairness. Any commercial use of access equipment should be rejected for all the above reasons, plus you may jeopardize your IRS nonprofit standing.

e) Community volunteers quickly become demoralized if you value revenue generated by rentals or funded projects higher than their efforts. Perception is reality, despite your most eloquent protestations to the contrary.

Seek Out Collaborations with Other Nonprofits or Schools. Combining your resources can significantly stretch your budget and provide you with valuable political collateral in the process. Most community-based organizations don't have a grant from the franchise fee to count on year to year. Each fiscal year they start from \$0 and raise the rest. This is their area of expertise, so ask them for advice as you attempt to improve your efforts.

a) Schools might be interested in using your public access facilities during the day for their student training and programming needs. Access volunteers tend to come in the late afternoon and evening when educators have gone home. Maybe the schools can "pay" rent with new equipment that they purchase at discounted educational rates.

b) Seek out local colleges and arrange to use their studio,

etc., during the weekend and evenings. This could be your primary or a secondary access facility. Offer to purchase gear in lieu of "rent."

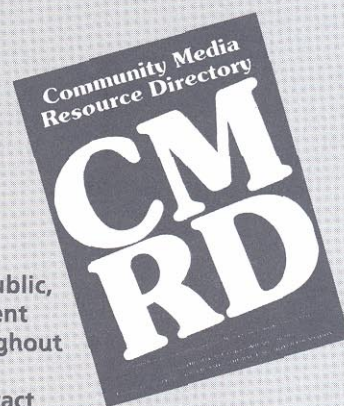
In conclusion, remember the three cents worth of advice and good luck in your efforts! Please let me know of your success stories and near-misses. Remember the PEG access Pledge of Allegiance: We must create any dreamed-of television program for anyone in our community as soon as they think of it (or sooner, when possible), free of charge, so help me Howdy Doody. Unfortunately, this is one miracle that does require a dollar or two on a regular basis. Your community will awaken to this fact sooner than later and work with you to find the funding. But first, you've got to ask for the help. PEG access is a winning proposition. I'm betting on it! Bingo? Who said anything about bingo?

If you have further questions regarding any of the above, please write to me at the address below.

Ron Cooper is Executive Director of Access Sacramento, 4623 T Street, Suite A, Sacramento, CA 95819. Email: rcooper444@aol.com.

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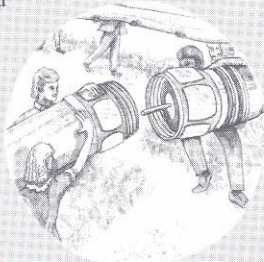
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Outreach Multnomah

by Patty Leahy

Successful outreach in community television is an ongoing challenge. People who work in community television know it's more than having that line and channel available for people to exercise their free speech, or having fun making television. It's more than satisfying the PEG requirements on a franchise. Successful outreach is having the community you serve discover that you serve valuable functions in community life, functions that help to identify and maintain the community's culture, and that serve as a catalyst for positive social change.



I have been an Outreach/Civic Involvement Coordinator at **Multnomah Community Television** for six months. I find that projects that may have been effective at one time may not be the second time around. As the culture changes, the needs change. The access community needs to critique and question its practices in this regard, and to seek means of assessing effectiveness. Are we continually being sensitive to the needs of the community? Are we still doing the right thing, the right way, at the right time? We are just seeing how important it is to measure the effectiveness of what we are doing and are seeking ways to establish mechanisms for measurement and feedback. This can be difficult for a nonprofit, but it is becoming more and more necessary.

The following are some of the things we are doing at Multnomah Community Television.

Community Hotline is an "open mike, open studio" type of project. Every Tuesday night a nonprofit may fit themselves into a 15-minute slot and talk about what services they provide for the community. They are also able to put up graphics, phone numbers, more information, etc. This is a live

Continued on next page...

Chicago Style

Continued from page 14

Mike Doyle, a Burnett creative team. We met, we talked, we angled, we strategized. Our discussions about the campaign were wide-ranging. We talked about people's increasing sense of disenfranchisement, this nation's "love to hate" relationship with television, how one person can make a difference, the importance of public space in television media, and the complexity of communicating about freedom of speech. At one point in the discussion I could feel Bill and Mike's impatience. Coming into this they were well aware it wasn't mayo or beer we were selling, but surely we needed to understand they could only do so much with a bus card.

Well, they did it. Mike penned the main concept, which was placed over Bill's striking design for the ad incorporating the CAN TV logo.

In addition to the main concept, Bill and Mike had been working with producer testimonials to capture the feel of some CAN TV programs: **Domestic Violence Hotline**, an HIV/AIDS education program, a series produced by seniors, a neighborhood news magazine, the **Regional Organ Bank's** live call-in show. Each demonstrates how television is being used by community people for solutions. We couldn't afford to print them all, and so we printed two as less expensive, smaller ads for placement inside the buses.

The main concept would be placed between the taillights of 60 buses, and a smaller version would be placed inside 575 buses coming out of North and Northwest Side garages. The bus routes covered areas where we most needed to improve our visibility. Each one of the 575 buses would also have one of the profile ads inside.

With the final touches being made to the ads, Melody and Tina turned to one of Burnett's media specialists to help determine how to expand the campaign. He agreed that public transportation is an excellent vehicle for the CAN TV message. He said newspaper advertising would be too expensive but he liked the idea of a cable bill stuffer. A PR vehicle that would not incur external costs was

video promos involving people pictured in the ads. Both cable companies were willing to run a :30 promo on the system on a "run-of-schedule basis," which means the spots could show up on any channel from **A&E** to **ESPN**. CAN TV was cablecasting long versions of the promos while the cable companies ran short versions.

We all agreed that we needed PR support for the campaign to get much-needed press coverage for CAN TV. We decided to work with a local PR agency with experience in the nonprofit sector to determine the approach to the PR. We came up with a twofold approach. Business and marketing columnists were sent a release along with pictures of the ads. The heading of the release said, "*Bus Ads Pitch 'TV Solution Station' to public. Chicago Access Launches Major Ad Campaign.*" Our follow-up calls emphasized the campaign itself. A targeted list of reporters from major dailies and weeklies were also sent the release. These reporters were less likely to be interested in cover-



Photo courtesy CAN TV

"The main concept would be placed between the taillights of 60 buses."

age of the ad campaign but more likely to be interested in a broader story. Follow-up strategies included talking about CAN TV in the context of the competitive telecommunications environment, CAN TV's extensive service to the community and, in some cases, specifics about the producers pictured in the campaign.

Launching the campaign in August with Chicago at its busiest meant that the press coverage would be tough to get. We

Continued on next page...

Chicago Style

Continued from previous page

recognized the need to use the ad campaign kickoff for relationship-building and to position ourselves as a source for stories pertaining to cable, telecommunications developments, cable franchising activities and PEG access. During follow-up calls, interested members of the press were invited to come and see CAN TV in action. Reporters from **Crain's Chicago Business** and the **Chicago Tribune** showed an interest in visiting us and learning more about current issues affecting CAN TV. We anticipate that those visits will take place as Ameritech's application heads into negotiations and refranchising activity with **TCI** and **Prime**

Cable begins.

The ad campaign represents an important step in refining CAN TV's message. The costs involved were decreased by significant pro bono work and the CTA in-kind trade. As we track the results of the "seeds" planted during the campaign, it will help us better evaluate the cost/benefit of engaging in such a large scale effort. In many respects, we can't afford not to.

Barbara Popovic is Executive Director of Chicago Access Corporation. Direct inquiries to Barbara or Takumi Iseda at (312) 738-1400, or e-mail us at CANTV@msc.com. CMR readers are welcome to use any ideas they find helpful.

Frontline Strategies

Continued from page 8

video production.

d) *Public access facilities must have sufficient trained staff to meet the needs of the facility.* The staff needs to have the necessary technical expertise, understand the mission of public access and support it, be culturally sensitive and, ultimately, reflect the demographics of the service area.

e) *A public access facility needs to have an active outreach program to assure that the programming reflects the diversity of the community and its issues.* An outreach program should have three goals: 1) to advertise its existence and to educate the public about its First Amendment mission,

2) to encourage viewership, and 3) to promote use of the facility by the whole community. Without outreach, the facility will be used only by a few groups of people who are highly motivated to express themselves.

f) *An access facility must raise the money needed to serve the mission.* Funding can come from franchise fees, cable company capital equipment support, fund-raising, fees for use, memberships, earned income, grants, and yearly contributions from local organizations. More and more it is becoming important that facilities have a diverse funding base.

3. A facility must have as part of its mission the fostering of community communication. Community communica-

tion occurs when there is a conversation between a producer and the community, such as a phone call or a letter. Call-in programs are an excellent way to promote community communication. Community communication is also occurring when the facility gets requests for copies of programs, when viewership is high, and when people are talking about what they've seen on the channel. It is important to remember that to encourage community communication, the prevailing notion that TV is passively viewed, not used, must be countered. This is definitely not easy, particularly when "public" access is frequently de-legitimized by the rest of the media.

4. Finally, a facility must have as part of its mission the advocacy of the First Amendment right to speak over television. An access center must be part of a community's life by taking its role as a First Amendment defender very seriously. A public access facility must be willing to join with others in the community taking on similar fights.

To create a successful public access facility, the access facility's board of directors must reflect the community, buy into this mission, and be willing to work for it.

Mary Cardona does business as Community Communications Consultant in Madison, Wisconsin. For an expanded version of this story, please contact her at 608-233-6142.

Outreach Multnomah

Continued from previous page... call-in.

Speak Out is along the same lines but open to any individual with any message. It is free. Since we started requiring a fee for folks to use our facility, **Speak Out** is our way of responding to people who cannot pay yet have an important message they wish to share. Participants need have no prior experience before they come in. A staff producer takes their call and schedules them into a slot. They also receive a letter in the mail before they come, explaining how it works. Once they arrive, they are given more tips on how to communicate in front of the camera. A small, two-camera studio is already set up and run by a volunteer crew with assistance from a staff producer.

Outreach for **Community Hotline** has included approaching organizations that deal with nonprofits, such as the **United Way**, and getting write-ups in their newsletters. The program has been in existence for about a year and slots are just starting to fill up on a regular basis. Word spreads about this service. This weekly program is repeated throughout the week. During election season, this program brings in many folks who are either running for an office or have strong positions on a ballot measure.

These efforts are a collaboration with the **Oregon League of Women Voters**. Our intention is to further opportunities during election time, and we are already planning for such future directions as analyzing campaign ads, dealing with minority candidates, and the like. This is an area that has much potential for most access facilities.

Seniors Video Potluck involves training senior citizens to do their own show. They form a task force and determine the content of shows. Programs might include meetings; storytelling (with photos); outreach to foster homes, nursing homes, and seniors' centers; a news magazine about what is happening in the seniors community; and the showcasing of seniors arts and crafts.

Building Community Support

Continued from page 9

board members whom we called together several times over the months leading up to the launch to provide advice and energy for the event. Although we did not ask the launch committee to do much except meet, it was our way of informing and involving as many prominent citizens as possible in the event. The committee worked moderately well. Our invitation to join went out to about 100 people—civic, nonprofit, educational, and political leaders. We had about 50 responses, and about 40 people eventually attended one or more meetings. We know they will also continue to be involved and interested in the channel as it develops.

Second, we had a media campaign that included radio talk shows, television talk shows, a speakers bureau, and newspaper coverage of the new operation and of events leading up to the launch. We designed an extensive media kit including releases, fact sheets, a poster, bios, timeline, a brochure, etc. Our executive director appeared on a morning interview show and on several call-in radio talk

shows.

Third, we implemented a campaign to produce programming for the new channel that would reflect the best of what access could be. We wanted to do this in a way that would involve the nonprofit community as producers and supporters. We sent out invitations to 70 of the most prominent nonprofit organizations in Greensboro, inviting them to apply to be a GCTV "pilot programmer." Each NPO chosen would work with a member of our newly hired staff to produce a 30-minute program about their group's activities. We would provide the technical know-how if they would provide the content. This was a one-time offer since, as we made clear, access staff does not ordinarily produce: they train community members to produce. We figured we had enough time before the launch to produce 10 programs to be used during the first month of our new

access can be in a community that until now has had a fairly narrow view.

Our fourth strategy was to develop a new "look" for the channel, one that would be distinctly different from anything seen by Greensboro citizens before. We developed a new logo and a slogan: "A

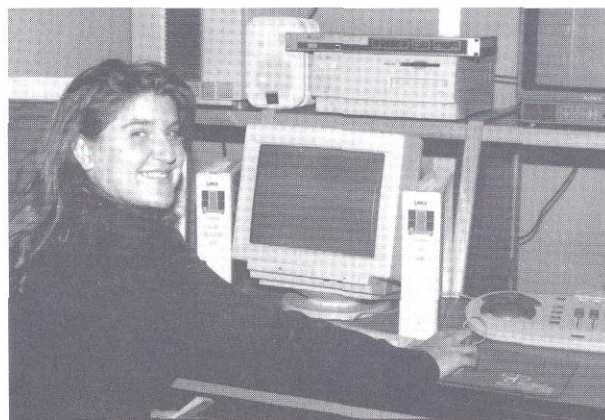


Photo courtesy GCTV

GCTV Staffer Mary Grant tries out the new editing equipment.

New Face For Cable 8." A series of three wonderfully creative promo spots for the new channel were produced by film students at UNCG (we are lucky enough to have their professor on our board), and we secured an agreement from Cablevision to run them during avails on other channels while they were also running on Channel 8. Part of the new look was the result of our suspending regular programming during the "launch month" and running a combination of the best of the series, some imported programming from **Deep Dish** and other sources, and the 10 NPO shows.

Our staff also produced a lively 30-minute introduction to the channel titled *A New Face for Cable 8*, which ran many times during the first month. It featured the history of GCTV beginning in the early contract renegotiation stages of 1992, introduced our 18-member board, toured the new facility, introduced the staff, and explained the philosophy behind access and what it can do for Greensboro. We made sure the signage on our downtown facility matched the logo, which was also carried through on all our publicity materials.

The fifth part of our plan involved

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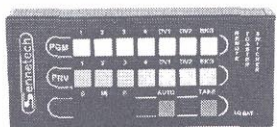
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channel's life. Even those not chosen to be pilot programmers would at least be clued in to what access television could offer. The response from the NPOs in town was astounding. Out of the 70 letters, we received about 40 responses from groups eager to be on access. The staff worked through the applications and chose 10 groups representative of a broad spectrum of the community, from the **Jaycees** to the **Volunteer Center**, from the **Urban Ministry** (homeless services) to the **Greensboro Sports Authority** and the **Epilepsy Association**. These 10 shows have created a new idea of what public

Building Community Support

Continued from previous page

carefully planning a series of events to coincide with the grand opening "Launch," which was scheduled to occur during Greensboro's **City Stage** weekend.

City Stage is the **Greensboro Cultural Arts**

Center's downtown street festival, which draws thousands of people for a weekend of performances, arts and crafts, and fun for all ages. Our new access center is luckily located right in the middle of one of the main streets blocked off and used for pedestrian traffic during City Stage, so it was a perfect event for us to draw lots of attention and

big crowds. On Thursday evening before the weekend of City Stage, our facility renovations were complete and we hosted a reception to allow the press, city officials, launch committee members, board members, and producers to tour the new facility. Representatives of the 10 nonprofit pioneer programmers received plaques from GCTV in recognition of their efforts.

We actually took the channel over from Cablevision a week before the launch because we wanted to ensure that all technical kinks had been worked out before the opening. The old programming, such as it was, was suspended except for those producers whose shows were actually public access shows. The new graphic community bulletin board ran with new music (instead of the commercial radio station that Cablevision had used) and announcements and promotionals for the *New Face for Cable 8*.

On Saturday, the opening day of City Stage, we officially launched the channel by opening the cameras on the exterior of the new facility, where our **board chair Laura Linder** welcomed the community to the new channel, introduced the mayor, and christened the new channel by breaking the bottle of "champagne" over a TV to the applause of gathered board members and spectators. For the entire two days of the street festival we talked to citizens about public access television,

both on the channel and on the street. Passersby came in and "soapboxed" on an open camera, talking about anything they wanted, and we taped it for later cablecast. We used a roving camera to tape responses

to City Stage from other festival participants. We even got an interview with U.S. Senate candidate **Harvey Gantt**. We cablecast live from City Stage throughout the day, featuring representatives from the 10 NPOs introducing their programs and plugging the new Channel 8. Board members, producers, staff, and launch committee members all pitched in to make

the 2-day event a great success. We sold T-shirts, mugs, and tote bags to publicize the channel and gave out pocket versions of the orientation and workshop schedules to anyone interested in programming. One measure of the success of the launch was that at the first orientation two and a half weeks later we had to turn people away from both noon and 6:00 p.m. sessions because the facility couldn't hold them all.

All in all. It's impossible to share all the lessons, both happy and painful, that we learned through this process. Access is still in its infancy in Greensboro. But the facility is open, the phones are ringing,

people are volunteering, and the staff is already overworked. The channel looks—and sounds—a thousand percent better. Workshops are filling up, the budget balances, and membership is growing. Though there were things we could have done differently and there were some things that didn't meet our expectations, we feel the launch was a huge success. We still have a lot of challenges ahead to make this channel the kind of resource Greensboro deserves.

Opening a channel, renovating and equipping a brand new facility, working with a new board, facing an uncertain community response—none of this is easy. Access isn't easy. But access promises real rewards to the community willing to work to make it happen. If your community is facing similar challenges, *please call us at 910-373-1100*. We're happy to share our hard-won lessons.

Sally Alvarez is on the Board of GCTV and teaches communications at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Telecom Act of 1996 Got You Perplexed?

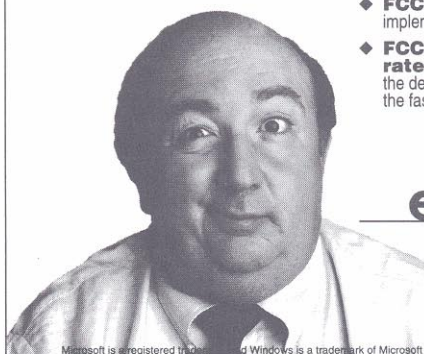
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The Road to Renewal in West Allis

Continued from page 10

changes were being made to training and operating procedures, and that I was spending my time building alliances, collaborations, and partnerships.

WACCC Hires Cable Consultant.

One goal was to prepare an evaluation report on the status of public access in West Allis. Part of the strategy to maintain the funding of the organization also

included hiring a cable consultant to conduct an analysis of the status of public access in West Allis. The research included surveys, interviews of all of the players in community television, and a review of historical documents to try to determine how community television in general, and WACCC in particular, were perceived by the community.

In the final evaluation, all three players—the cable company, the city, and WACCC—were found

negligent. The cable company didn't deliver on its promises, the City didn't enforce the franchise, and WACCC had taken too much time to find a sense of direction. The intensively researched, detailed, and brutally honest report contributed to the city's decision to allow WACCC to continue to operate as a separate entity and to continue receiving the funding that had increased to over \$75,000 per year. The report went so far as to suggest that the city take a look at placing the complete control of access into the hands of WACCC during renegotiation.

Strong Community-based Board.

The WACCC board of influential community leaders played a critical role in our ability to reverse the city's perception of WACCC. We began to be seen as a capable and competent organization, able and better equipped than the cable company to handle the facilitation of access activities for the community.

Transfer of Ownership. The city initiated the 1994 renegotiation process with **Crown Cable**, the third owner of the

cable system. At that time, the city was informed that the system was up for sale to **Marcus Cable**, a Texas-based company.

At the public hearings, the community expressed extreme disappointment in the way access had been handled in recent years by the cable company. There was strong community support for WACCC. Supporters wanted public access to maintain its separate identity outside of

"We began to be seen as a capable and competent organization, able and better equipped than the cable company to handle the facilitation of access activities for the community."

city government and the cable company. We encouraged the city to give the cable company notice to cure the noncompliance issues and negotiate some funds in an attempt to make good on the access provisions that were never delivered in the original franchise. The value of the undelivered services, including equipment resources and support staff, had been estimated at a minimum of \$650,000. We eventually received \$23,000 as a result of the transfer of ownership, the

cost of which was passed through to the subscribers. Since the city had never cited the cable company in writing for noncompliance, it did not have a good bargaining position. But, from our perspective, \$23,000 was better than nothing.

The fact that the city negotiated for the money during the transfer demonstrated both a support for access facilities and a vote of confidence in WACCC. WACCC was now ready to cross over the line to equipment provider, trainer, and facilitator.

Upgrading Equipment. No equipment had been replaced since 1980. WACCC immediately purchased new equipment, which dramatically increased the number of shows produced. In 1993, 90 shows were produced. In 1994, the number increased to 190 shows, and in 1995 there were 250 shows and 19 series running on the channel.

Renewal. Once again, in an attempt to be proactive, WACCC hired its own cable consultant to develop a proposal calling for access to be put in the hands of WACCC in the new franchise agreement.

It asked for funding at least equal to what had been promised in the original franchise agreement. The proposal emphasized our willingness to work with other community organizations, and particularly the school district, in providing resources for educational access. It stressed the importance of a third-party contract between the cable company and the not-for-profit organization, leaving the operating funding out of the franchise agreement and having all of the details of the responsibilities, provisions and the handing over of the facilities for access from the cable company to WACCC worked out and agreed to prior to the signing of the franchise agreement. We also encouraged the inclusion of a re-opener clause halfway through the franchise to look at the use of public access and provide for equipment replacement.

In the request for proposals, the city made it clear that they expected the cable company's proposal to address provisions for putting access into the hands of a not-for-profit. But Marcus Cable did not have a big commitment to access in any other system they owned. So to get them to agree to a funding package would be a challenge.

When it came time to negotiate, the city chose to leave WACCC completely out of the meetings. We invited the city administrator and the chairman of the License and Health Committee to meet with our board. We were reassured that the city was looking out for our interests. But as far as specifics, we were left completely in the dark.

We approached the general manager of the cable company numerous times to try to educate him about the activities that had been taking place at WACCC. Even though a cable company representative attended our monthly board meetings and received all of the reports, we suspected that he didn't share the information with his boss. The general manager kept scheduling meetings with us and then canceling. I sent him our annual report and a recent newsletter. He never did make the time to meet with us prior to the public hearing. When we got there, we found out why.

Continued on next page...

The Road to Renewal in West Allis

Continued from previous page

Access Provisions. The cable company had put forward a proposal stating that they were willing to provide for access. The provisions (shared with us by the city just before the public hearing) were to be over and above the five percent franchise fee and include \$300,000 in capital, \$100,000 for operating in year one, \$125,000 in year two, and \$150,000 for years three through ten.

The WACCC board was doubtful that the amount dedicated to public access was really enough to cover the cost of constructing a new studio structure, purchase all of the necessary playback and production equipment, and effectively staff all of the functions we would need to provide for 10 years. But, for a community this size and in the current environment, the city felt it was the best they could do. The city staff experienced a very tough negotiating process.

Cable Company Negative Campaign. After Marcus had come to a verbal agreement with the city about what they would be willing to offer for public access, and just prior to the public hearing on renegotiation, the Marcus Cable general manager wrote a letter to the city aldermen and the mayor implying that all WACCC consisted of was a group of paid staff people trying to pretend they work for PBS and that the expense was too great of a burden for West Allis residents to pay for the few who benefited.

In addition to the letter, the cable company produced a public service announcement that played repeatedly in weeks just prior to the public hearing on **ESPN, MTV, Lifetime**, and other channels. It stated that the subscriber rates were going to go up and that the PEG access provisions that Marcus was being forced to support were to blame. They encouraged cable subscribers to attend the public hearing and to speak against funding for public access.

Since the general manager chose not to take the time to familiarize himself with WACCC, he did not realize that we had established a very positive standing with the city. The fact that the cable company

was trying to wiggle out of the contract language to which it had already agreed, whipped the aldermen and the mayor into a frenzy.

The Public Hearing. More than 100 residents showed up at the public hearing. The mayor blasted the cable company for their underhanded methods and talked about the value of public

access to a democracy and the value of not having to depend on a newspaper article that is slanted to get your voice heard.

WACCC's board president asked for a show of hands from the people present in the council room of those who supported public access and WACCC. Virtually everyone except the cable company employees raised their hands. One man stood up to say that if he didn't have public access as a way to vent his frustration about the management of government, he might join a militia. Every person who got up to speak was a volunteer. Even those who were not directly involved in producing programs said they enjoyed seeing the locally produced programming and city-wide events. Not one resident spoke against the funding of public access.

The strategy employed by the cable company backfired.

The result was we were awarded the \$300,000 in capital, the existing 15-year-old remote van that has only 9000 miles on it, and \$100,000 in 1996, \$125,000 in 1997, and \$150,000 for 1998 through 2005 to cover operations. This funding will provide the resources to get us up and running. To fulfill our complete vision, we will have to do fundraising.

Though we encouraged language in the franchise that would have enabled WACCC take over the channel and studio when we were ready, the city wrote language into the contract stating that WACCC would take over the channel and studio functions by January 1997. But,

since no third-party agreement was developed as a part of the process, and since communication with us was negligible, they did not include language addressing any of the transitional issues or a dialogue with the school district on a partnership. There is a revisitation clause for technology and marketing, but it doesn't specifically address access.

So the transition is turning out to be quite a challenge. After jumping through hoops set up by the city, including developing a controversial programming policy, we finally received the capital and operating funds from the city at the end of November, 1996. We are still in negotiation for rent-free space in a school district building in return for training, access, and facilitation. But everything will work out.

It always does.

We recently received a \$7000 grant for strategic planning from the **Milwaukee Foundation**. It was an excellent community-building exercise that enrolled community leaders new to WACCC into the vision of the organization. We now have a comprehensive plan of action down on paper. We just finished negotiating with the local paper to run the channel schedule on a weekly basis. We also will be increasing our staff. So a lot of

wonderful things have happened in the last year.

But I have to ask myself if the day-to-day, week-to-week, month-to-month struggles we are faced with in providing the public with access to technology to tell their stories, will ever stop being such a challenge. I have a sign hanging on my office. It is a constant reminder of why I do this work. It is an old Native American Hopi tribal saying: *"The people who tell the stories, rule the world."* Hopefully, from the impact that we are having on the community, and that the community is having on itself, we are positively influencing the future rulers of the world.

Mary Shanahan-Spanic is the Executive Director of WACCC.

"The people who tell the stories rule the world."

"One man stood up to say that if he didn't have public access as a way to vent his frustration about the management of government, he might join a militia."

Successful PEGotiations in Missoula

Continued from page 11

Use and support of MCAT throughout the community is more widespread, and access participation is one of the only areas of agreement with fundamentalists and atheists, cowboys and punks, loggers and Earth Firsters, and producers of all ages, colors, and lifestyles. As MCAT continues to grow, we recognize the need to be better at getting the message out on a regular basis, and to make more effective public relations use of our newsletters and the channel itself.

Furthermore, MCAT staff assists access producers in expanding the audience for their work. Publicizing their playdates, distributing programming to other community television centers, and providing dubs to the public library and local video rental businesses are inexpensive and effective practices.

Along with a new city council, a major factor in MCAT's smoother contract renewal this summer was vastly increased

educational access programming. We were successful in applying for grants to place a media artist in the three local public high schools each year since 1994. Hundreds of students in classes ranging from Journalism to Drama to Art to French have been producing a weekly *High School Hour* plus plenty of special programming. Many community members (especially friends and families of students)

became regular MCAT viewers and advocates.

MCAT also developed a better relationship with the business community. Working

with the **Chamber of Commerce** and private sector video producers, we ironed out a Third Party Agreement policy that allows for local organizations to hire producers using MCAT equipment to produce programming for the channel. Our annual Chamber membership dues are dollars well spent. Noncommercial does not mean antibusiness.

We have also significantly increased our fundraising efforts. Our 1996 budget

calls for approximately 25 percent of revenues to come from sources other than our contract with the city. Our big annual auction is a high-visibility event and a party as well as a fundraiser. It is also a message to city leaders that we require more funding to keep pace with community demand.

We will never again assume that we have enough support simply because we successfully attain our goals. Education and promotion need to be ongoing, not something that we can check off a to-do list. We realize also that the political pendulum will eventually swing in another direction. To be a true community access organization we need the support and participation of constituencies across the board, not just those who have traditionally been our friends. The main lesson that we learned is that there is no such thing as too much outreach or too much access.

Randy Ammon is Executive Director of Missoula Community Access Television and Chair of the Northwest Regional Board of the Alliance for Community Media.

"There is no such thing as too much outreach or too much access."

An Invitation to Join the

Alliance for Communications Democracy

6...increasing awareness of Community Television through educational programs and participation in court cases involving franchise enforcement and constitutional questions about access television.

Become an Alliance Subscriber for \$350/year and receive detailed reports on current court cases threatening access, pertinent historical case citations, and other Alliance activities.

- Voting membership open to non-profit access operations for an annual contribution of \$3,000.
- Non-voting memberships available to organizations and individuals at the following levels:
 - Alliance Associate, \$2500 - copies of all briefs and reports.
 - Alliance Supporter, \$500 - copies of all reports and enclosures.
 - Alliance Subscriber, \$350 - copies of all reports.

Direct membership inquiries to Rob Brading, Multnomah Community Television, 26000 SE Stark St., Gresham, OR 97038, or phone 503/667-7636.

Voting Members: Chicago Access Corporation, Illinois • Montgomery Community Television, Inc., Maryland • Staten Island Television, New York • Boston Community Access & Programming Foundation, Inc., Massachusetts • GRTV, Grand Rapids, Michigan • Tuscon Community Cable Corporation, Arizona • O'lelo: The Corporation for Community TV, Hawaii • Multnomah Community TV, Oregon • Manhattan Neighborhood Network, New York • Cable Access St. Paul, Minnesota.

Non-voting Members: City of Iowa City, Iowa • North Suburban Access Corp., Minnesota • Oakland County Cable Corporation, Michigan • Ann Arbor Community Access Television, Michigan • Columbus Community Cable Access, Inc., Ohio • Capital Community TV, Oregon • Cincinnati Community Video, Ohio • Alliance for Community Media, Central States Region • Alliance for Community Media, Far West Region • George Stoney, New York University, NY • Bronx Community Cable Programming, Inc., NY.

Earned Income

Continued from page 12

need to assess the products and services that you offer. Then assess the processes it will take to get things accomplished and their costs. Be especially careful of the local video production industry and other competitive forces. Enthusiastically present your financial predicament to important constituencies and stakeholders. This will include, most importantly, your staff and board. Other important stakeholders include your client base (the producers/program providers), the government representatives

"For all the energy and time we have put into earned income efforts, I think it has not only been a financial success, but it has also boosted staff morale...."

and bureaucrats, the citizens of your town (nonmembers), the media, and potential funders. All of these constituencies need to support your earned income efforts in order for them to be successful.

Also, emphasize marketing and promotion, set the price on your products and services appropriately for your market, set revenue goals for the effort, emphasize customer service, systematically measure the impact of your successes, and let your constituencies know you are doing well. For all of the energy and time we have put into earned

income efforts, I think it has not only been a financial success, but it has also boosted staff morale and improved the quality of our service to the community. It has allowed us to open longer, raise salaries, serve more low-income citizens with free services, produce more programs, and support more community projects. Given the uncertainties of traditional fund-raising, I encourage all access centers to investigate the money-making potential of earned income strategies.

R. Vincent Hamilton is General Manager of Access Houston Cable Corporation.

Time Warner v. NYC

Continued from page 7

Area Educational Telecommunications Consortium v. FCC, which upheld the determination in **Alliance for Community Media v. FCC** that the statute at issue "does not restore to cable operators editorial rights that they once had, and the countervailing First Amendment interest is nonexistent, or at least much diminished."

The **Alliance for Community Media** filed an amicus brief in the case and Executive Director **Barry Forbes** was deposed as an expert witness. The Alliance also made its perspective and position known in an opinion piece published in the November 19, 1996, issue of **Multichannel News**. Although the Alliance supports the City of New York's right to control its programming on its channels without interference from Time Warner, the Alliance insists that the purpose of government access is not to dedicate a channel to a national, commercial news service. The Alliance further recommended that Fox use a leased access channel—and that Time Warner be required to follow leased access provisions.

**Do what's right.
Do it right.
Do it right now.**



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(Please check all that apply)

Yes, I want to join the Alliance for Community Media. I am a(n):

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|--|---|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Producer | <input type="checkbox"/> Cable Regulatory Staff or Board Member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

ORGANIZATIONAL

- | | |
|--|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Over \$100,000 annual revenues | \$305 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10,000 to \$100,000 annual revenues | \$195 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under \$10,000 annual revenues | \$85 |



All organizational memberships expire on September 30th of each year. Join between April and September and pay half the annual rate.

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Affiliated is available only if your organization is a member: includes paid staff, volunteer producers, board members or other unpaid individuals associated with a member organization.

Affiliated:

- | |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Staff \$40 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer \$30 |

At-Large:

- | |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Staff \$85 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer \$35 |

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I am including an additional amount to further support the activities of the Alliance and help broaden participation in the organization.

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TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____

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Membership name (individual or organization)

Contact Person (organizational members only)

Mailing Address

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ Fax (____) _____

Name of organization of affiliation (affiliated members only)

TYPE OF ORGANIZATION

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit | <input type="checkbox"/> Educational institution | <input type="checkbox"/> Library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government | <input type="checkbox"/> Cable system | <input type="checkbox"/> Other for-profit organization |

TYPE OF FACILITY

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public access | <input type="checkbox"/> Educational access | <input type="checkbox"/> Government access |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local origination | <input type="checkbox"/> Leased access | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

DEMOGRAPHICS (individual members only)

This optional information will help us to better serve current and potential members.

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black | <input type="checkbox"/> White | <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic | <input type="checkbox"/> Asian or Pacific Islander |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Native American | <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Male |

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Allowing PEG to Work

Continued from page 7

very communities they seek to serve. Second, we need to educate local municipal representatives and officials: encourage them to negotiate franchise agreements that adequately support PEG access operational and capital needs. Only through sufficient political and financial support can we confidently answer the questions that arise about "making access channels carry their own in the video marketplace." And speaking of that video marketplace, I offer my third point of disagreement.

Mr. Brenner is totally accurate when he says that "competing technologies like wireless cable (MMDS) and direct broadcast satellite (DBS) like DirecTV have no access requirements, PEG or leased." However, the impression he leaves is that cable television, too, should have no access requirements. Of course, the other obvious solution is to make the other telecommunications services provide PEG access requirements as well. And that is exactly what the **Alliance for Community Media National Board of Directors** has chosen as their major long-range goal. At their meeting in October 1995, the

Alliance Board approved the five-year key objective "to pass, by 2001, the **Telecommunications Access Act**, which would guarantee every person free or low-cost access to producing and receiving multimedia information over any public network which uses public rights of way, by providing community-based organizations with the needed funding mechanisms, capacity, interoperability, technical information and accessibility."

The Alliance has taken a strong leadership position; it is currently engaged in an aggressive plan to reach this objective. Draft wording of the proposed act is being hammered out by the **Alliance Public Policy Committee**. The national office is developing a local grassroots network through the **Community Coalition Initiative**, building a national coalition through the **Media Democracy in Action** consortium and our **Partners** program, researching state telecommunications law in anticipation of proposing test legislation, and working closely with key public interest allies in Washington DC.

Over the past decades, dedicated access advocates across the country have proven that PEG channels can work. The

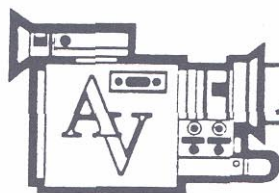
current telecommunications technical and political environment cannot change that fact. Today, our challenge is to create an environment in which PEG access is allowed to work for the next millennium. And now for my fourth and final point.

Mr. Brenner suggests that access requirements should be "reexamined" if they do not "add to the quality of cable service," which I would interpret as the ability of the cable operator to sell its service to subscribers. I would suggest, instead, that all the telecommunications agreements that do not fairly compensate the landlords for the use of their property and do not allow entry to that property, should be the requirements that need to be reexamined.

I am also fond of the expression "lead, follow, or get out of the way." The Alliance has proven decisively over the past years that it can lead, and through the visionary Telecommunications Access Act, it amply demonstrates its continuing ability to lead.

I suggest that for Mr. Brenner and the NCTA, this leaves only two other choices.

Barry Forbes is Executive Director of the Alliance for Community Media.



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This will be the most extensive fundraising track ever offered at any Alliance conference. If you are looking for creative ways of raising additional funds, the Central States Spring Conference is a must for you and your facility.

Also, on Thursday night enjoy eats, drink, and a tour of **AccessVision**. Our volunteers are proud to guide you through the in-house studios, edit rooms, remote studios, and channel playback areas.

On Saturday, May 3, conference participants are invited to make the one-hour trek to **Grand Rapids** for a reception at the new **Media Center** from 2:00 - 5:00 p.m.

If you love to laugh, if *Saturday Night Live* or *Second City* are favorites of yours, then you don't want to miss the entertainment Friday night. Two comedians have been scheduled for our conference at the **Gary Fields' Comedy Club**. Tickets are an additional \$10 and are available to the first 75 requests.

Early registration must be in by April 11th. Early registration full conference for members is \$65; \$90 for nonmember. Friday only will cost members \$45, nonmembers \$70. Registrations received after April 11th will cost members \$75 (full conference) or \$55 (Friday only). Late registration for nonmembers will cost \$100 (full conference) or \$80 (Friday only). For further registration information and forms, please call **Dale Geminder** at (616)968-3633.

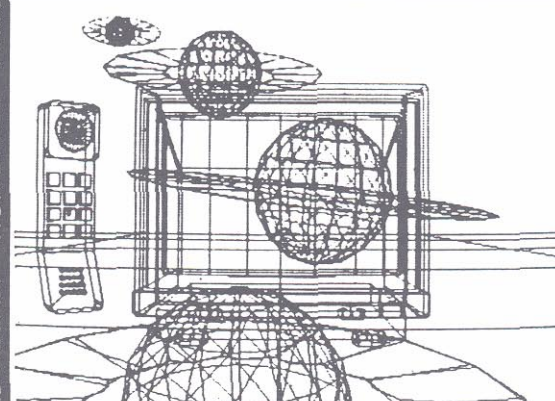
Kudos to CAN TV

"Who cares about access TV in Chicago anyway?" Three years ago this question galled, goaded, then galvanized the staff of **Chicago Access Network TV** to launch a PR campaign to increase community involvement. A measure of their success came this year in the form of two prestigious community awards.

Cable Positive's Brad Wojcoski Award was presented to **CAC** for their more than 100 hours of programming dedicated to fighting AIDS in their community. The station's interactive **AIDS CALL-IN LIVE**, aired twice weekly, allows viewers to ask for and receive information and referrals on AIDS.

CAC also received a 1997 **Sidney R. Yates Arts Advocacy Award** for its outreach programs focused on the arts. CAC was cited in particular for its media literacy education and its community bulletin board service that features community arts events in all areas of the performing and visual arts.

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Congratulations to all of us on our victories with the Telecommunications Act of 1996, FCC Regulations on Open Video Systems, and our Supreme Court Case, *Alliance v. FCC*! Our special thanks go to the organizations and individuals below who valued Alliance Public Policy efforts enough to support them financially. But we have many battles ahead: court challenges to the Telecommunications Act, state legislation and regulation, and the passage of the Telecommunications Access Act of 2001.

Help ensure more Alliance for Community Media victories tomorrow with your commitment today.

Join your colleagues and become a member of the Public Policy Council or Network!

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Donors of \$100 or more receive an Alliance lapel pin. Public Policy Network and Council Members receive regular news up-dates. Council members receive more detailed information and direct consultation with the Government Relations Director. Send your check to the Alliance at 666 11th St., NW, Suite 806, Washington DC 20001. Thank you!

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Bronx Community Cable Program., NY	Buske Group, Sacramento CA
Cable Access Dallas, TX	Cambridge Community Television, MA
Cape Code Community TV, MA	Capital Community TV, Salem OR
Cincinnati Community Video, OH	Citizen Television, New Haven CT
City Of St. Paul, MN	Community Access Ctr, Kalamazoo MI
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Evanston Community Television, IL	Fairfax Cable Access Corp., VA
Jones Intercable, Tampa FL	Carl Kucharski, Somerville MA
Lowell Telecommunications Corp., MA	Malden Access Television, MA
Manchester Community Television, NH	Milwaukee Access Telecom. Authority
Multnomah Comm. TV, Gresham OR	N. Dakota Cty Community TV, Inver Grove Hts, MN
Newton Cable Access Corp., MA	Pegasys, Inc., Enid OK
Salem Access Television Corp., MA	Saratoga Community Access, CA
Solon Community Television, Solon OH	Somerville Community Access TV, MA
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